

THE MANAGERIAL COMPETENCIES OF THE APPAREL DESIGNERS:

A STUDY BASED ON INDUSTRIAL VIEW

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ABSTRACT

The managerial competencies of the apparel designers' study was conducted based on the industry view on two concepts such as Leadership management and global awareness. About 50 questionnaires were distributed randomly to the heads of different types of fashion apparel business establishments across India - like export house, fashion retail store and fashion house across India, of which 39 were responded. The response rate is to be 78%. The objectives of the study were to identify the required Leadership management skills for apparel designers and to ascertain the global awareness among apparel designers. Leadership management has been analysed based on ten variables such as communication skills, creative thinking skills, critical thinking skills, critique oneself constructively, critique others constructively, decision making, evaluate the environment, interpret customer needs/wants, leadership and team work.. The criteria of global awareness have been analysed based on six different variables such as educational and political issues, global competition etc. Interpreting customer needs and wants was a vital skill in leadership management. The skill of critiquing others constructively was of least importance under leadership management. Ethics and decision making and sustainable business practices were considered of equal importance under global awareness, whereas political issues are held as least important.

KEYWORDS: Apparel Designer. Competency, Apparel Industry, Industry View & Apparel Competency

Received: Oct 26, 2018; **Accepted:** Nov 16, 2018; **Published:** Dec 06, 2018; **Paper Id.:** IJHRMRDEC201818

INTRODUCTION

The critical challenges in an apparel industry were the improvement of managerial competencies besides the services and product quality. The perception on managerial competencies in apparel industry, specifically retail service quality varies across different cities, the retailers can meet the customer expectations based on the factors drive them (Thenmozhi Raja et al). The designers of apparel industry were categorised as “Proactive”, “Inquisitive” “Cordial” and “Habitual” based on these skills (Ravi, S (2018) & Mohanraj. P, et.al, (2015b). In this study managerial competencies required for these apparel designers were identified. Access, Communication, Competency, Courtesy, Credibility, Reliability, Responsibility, security, Tangibles and Understanding/ knowing the customer were 10 dimensions of service quality determinants. Later, they were simplified into five dimensions, including Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy (A. Parasuraman). Two dimensional managerial competencies such as leadership management and global awareness were taken up for the study.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Modern apparel designers were confronted with a rapidly changing social, political, and cultural landscape; escalating competition; expansion into new geographic areas and channels; forward integration by

manufacturers; increasingly savvy consumers; and increased reliance on technology (Kim & Johnson, 2009). University C & T programs have equipped for merchandising careers in the retail industry for decades (Garner & Buckley, 1988; Hurst & Good, 2009; Laughlin & Kean, 1995). More C&T merchandising personnels aspire to careers in retailing as buyers, managers, or small business owners. The retailing industry is the second largest employer, employing more than 15 million people (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). In the case of online shopping behaviour, casual shopping has been more preferred followed by discounts and occasions (Mohanraj. P, et.al, 2017^{a,b}). Skill requirements of employees for retail outlets, consumer behaviours on digital environment of apparel designers were analysed. (Mohanraj P, et.al, 2017 a).

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study

- To identify the required Leadership management skills for apparel designers.
- To ascertain the global awareness among apparel designers.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated based on the objectives.

- There exist required Leadership management skills among apparel designers.
- There exists a significant global awareness among apparel designers.

Sample

About 50 questionnaires were distributed randomly to the heads of different types of fashion apparel business establishments across India - like export house, fashion retail store and fashion house across India, of which 39 were responded. The response rate is to be 78%.

DATA RELIABILITY

Reliability is concerned with the consistency of a variable. There are two identifiable aspects of this issue: external and internal reliability. Nowadays, the most common method of estimating internal reliability is Cronbach alpha (α). The formula used for internal reliability is

$$\alpha = \frac{K}{K-1} \left(1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^K \sigma_{Y_i}^2}{\sigma_X^2} \right)$$

A commonly accepted rules for describing internal consistency using Cronbach alpha (Cronbach, Lee and Shavelson 2004) are $\alpha \geq 0.9$ (Excellent), $0.9 > \alpha \geq 0.8$ (Good), $0.8 > \alpha \geq 0.7$ (Acceptable), $0.7 > \alpha \geq 0.6$ (Questionable), $0.6 > \alpha \geq 0.5$ (Poor) and $0.5 > \alpha$ (Unacceptable).

In order to identify the reliability of the variables, Cronbach alpha (α) analysis has been carried out for 16 variables on managerial competencies of apparel designers. The Alpha value for the same are calculated and shown in Table 1, which indicates that all the variables are accepted for further studies.

Table 1: Reliability Test

S.No.	Concept	No. of Variables	Cronbach Alpha Value
1	Leadership Management	10	0.8105
2	Global Awareness	6	0.7736
Total		16	

DATA ANALYSIS

The managerial competencies of the apparel designers' study were conducted based on the industry view on two concepts such as Leadership management and global awareness.

LEADERSHIP MANAGEMENT

In general, leadership is individual's traits and capabilities. However, in this study, the leadership management has been analysed based on ten variables such as communication skills, creative thinking skills, critical thinking skills, critique oneself constructively, critique others constructively, decision making, evaluate the environment, interpret customer needs/wants, leadership and team work. The opinions of the respondents were given in Table 2. The mean and standard deviation were calculated based on the opinion. The ranks were ascertained based on mean and standard deviation, which were shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Leadership Management

S.No	Description	Not at all	Not Sure	Not Very Much	Quite a lot	Must	Mean	Std.	Rank
1	Communication skills	1 2.60%	0 0.00%	1 2.60%	17 43.60%	20 51.30%	4.41	0.785	4
2	Creative thinking skills	1 2.60%	0 0.00%	6 15.40%	10 25.60%	22 56.40%	4.33	0.927	7
3	Critical thinking skills	1 2.60%	0 0.00%	3 7.70%	21 53.80%	14 35.90%	4.21	0.801	8
4	Critique oneself constructively	1 2.60%	0 0.00%	6 15.40%	19 48.70%	13 33.30%	4.1	0.852	9
5	Critique others constructively	0 0.00%	1 2.60%	10 25.60%	19 48.70%	9 23.10%	3.92	0.774	10
6	Decision making	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	3 7.70%	14 35.90%	22 56.40%	4.49	0.644	3
7	Evaluate the environment	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	2 5.10%	22 56.40%	15 38.50%	4.33	0.577	6
8	Interpret customer needs/wants	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1 2.60%	8 20.50%	30 76.90%	4.74	0.498	1
9	Leadership	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	5 12.80%	15 38.50%	19 48.70%	4.36	0.707	5
10	Team work	1 2.60%	0 0.00%	1 2.60%	13 33.30%	24 61.50%	4.51	0.79	2

The mean value of all the ten variables ranges between 4.74 and 3.92 which indicate that the respondent's dependency lies between quite a lot to must. The standard deviation ranges between 0.498 and 0.927 which indicates that there was no much deviation in their opinion. Interpret customer needs/wants has been indicated as first preference of managerial competencies of apparel designers among the respondents. It is followed by team work and decision making. Critique others constructively followed by critique oneself constructively were indicated as least preference.

The study has further been extended to regions. The region was grouped as southern region and the rest was as other region. The mean and standard deviation of the southern region and other region were calculated based on the responses. The ranks were assigned based on mean and standard deviation. The region wise mean, standard deviation and rank were shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Leadership Management vs Region

S. No	Description	Southern			Other		
		Mean	Std.	Rank	Mean	Std.	Rank
1	Communication skills	4.65	.493	4	4.23	.922	6
2	Creative thinking skills	4.35	.786	7	4.32	1.041	3
3	Critical thinking skills	4.35	.606	6	4.09	.921	9

Table 3: Contd.,							
4	Critique oneself constructively	4.06	.748	9	4.14	.941	8
5	Critique others constructively	4.06	.899	10	3.82	.664	10
6	Decision making	4.82	.393	2	4.23	.685	5
7	Evaluate the environment	4.24	.437	8	4.41	.666	2
8	Interpret customer needs/wants	4.88	.332	1	4.64	.581	1
9	Leadership	4.59	.618	5	4.18	.733	7
10	Team work	4.82	.393	2	4.27	.935	4

It is observed from the Table 3 that the first three preferences of heads, in the case of southern region were given for “interpret customer needs/wants” followed by “team work” and “decision making”. The mean value ranges between 4.88 and 4.06 which indicate that all the variables lie between quiet a lot and must. The standard deviation ranges between 0.332 and 0.899 which indicates that there has been no significant difference in the opinion among the respondents.

However, in the case of other region, the first preference is identical to southern region and the two preferences were also not identical: - “Evaluate the environment” followed by “creative thinking skills”. The least preference was given as “critique others constructively” by both southern region and other region head of the industries.

The analysis has been further extended to different portfolios like design, merchandising and production. The mean and standard deviation thus calculated based on opinion were shown in Table 4 along with rank assigned based on mean and standard deviation.

Table 4: Leadership Management vs Portfolio

S.No.	Description	Design			Merchandising			Production		
		Mean	Std.	Rank	Mean	Std.	Rank	Mean	Std.	Rank
1	Communication skills	4.38	.650	5	4.39	.979	5	4.50	.535	2
2	Creative thinking skills	4.31	.855	8	4.28	1.074	7	4.50	.756	4
3	Critical thinking skills	4.38	.768	7	4.11	.900	8	4.13	.641	7
4	Critique oneself constructively	4.46	.519	4	4.00	1.029	9	3.75	.707	9
5	Critique others constructively	4.08	.954	10	3.94	.725	10	3.63	.518	10
6	Decision making	4.62	.650	2	4.56	.616	3	4.13	.641	7
7	Evaluate the environment	4.38	.650	5	4.33	.485	6	4.25	.707	5
8	Interpret customer needs/wants	4.85	.376	1	4.67	.594	1	4.75	.463	1
9	Leadership	4.08	.760	9	4.61	.608	2	4.25	.707	5
10	Team work	4.54	.660	3	4.50	.985	4	4.50	.535	2

It is seen from Table 4 that the first preference was “interpret customer needs/wants” in the case of all three portfolios. The second and third preferences by design portfolio were “decision making” and “team work”. In case of merchandising, the second and third preferences were “leadership” and decision making” and in case of production, the second and third preferences were “communication skills” and “team work”. The least preference was identified by all the three portfolios that is “critique others constructively”.

The analysis has further been extended business type. The mean and standard deviation thus calculated based on opinion were shown in Table 5 along with rank assigned based on mean and standard deviation values.

Table 5: Leadership Management vs Business Type

S.No	Description	Export House			Retail			Fashion house		
		Mean	Std.	Rank	Mean	Std.	Rank	Mean	Std.	Rank
1	Communication skills	4.57	.514	4	4.50	.527	3	4.20	1.082	5
2	Creative thinking skills	4.36	.842	7	4.70	.483	1	4.07	1.163	8
3	Critical thinking skills	4.43	.646	6	4.00	.471	9	4.13	1.060	7

Table 5: Contd.,										
4	Critique oneself constructively	4.21	.802	9	4.40	.516	4	3.80	1.014	10
5	Critique others constructively	3.93	.997	10	4.00	.667	10	3.87	.640	9
6	Decision making	4.86	.363	3	4.20	.632	7	4.33	.724	2
7	Evaluate the environment	4.29	.469	8	4.40	.516	4	4.33	.724	2
8	Interpret customer needs/wants	5.00	.000	1	4.70	.483	1	4.53	.640	1
9	Leadership	4.57	.646	5	4.20	.632	7	4.27	.799	4
10	Team work	4.93	.267	2	4.40	.516	4	4.20	1.082	5

It is seen that interpretation of customer needs and wants was considered to be the vital criterion for export houses and fashion houses, whereas inclusive of interpretation of customer needs and wants as well as creative thinking skills held a primary role for retail. Similarly, fashion houses held decision making and evaluation of the environment to the same standard as a second preference, whereas, for export houses the second preference was teamwork.

Critiquing others constructively was considered the least preference for retail and export houses, while second least for fashion houses, which held critiquing oneself constructively as the least preference.

Table 6: Leadership Management – Rank Order

S. No	Description	Overall	Region		Portfolio			Business Type		
			Southern	Other	Design	Merchandising	Production	Export House	Retail	Fashion House
1	Communication skills	4	4	6	5	5	2	4	3	5
2	Creative thinking skills	7	7	3	8	7	4	7	1	8
3	Critical thinking skills	8	6	9	7	8	7	6	9	7
4	Critique oneself constructively	9	9	8	4	9	9	9	4	10
5	Critique others constructively	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	9
6	Decision making	3	2	5	2	3	7	3	7	2
7	Evaluate the environment	6	8	2	5	6	5	8	4	2
8	Interpret customer needs/wants	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
9	Leadership	5	5	7	9	2	5	5	7	4
10	Team work	2	2	4	3	4	2	2	4	5

Interpretation of customer needs and wants was held at the first preference against region, portfolio and, business type under leadership management. Team work was held at second preference for production and export houses; similarly decision making was listed second under design, and fashion houses, while the Southern region considered both variables as its second preference. Critiquing others constructively was held at least preference by all, excluding fashion houses which held it at second to last preference.

In this study, the criteria of global awareness have been analysed based on six different variables such as educational and political issues, global competition etc. The opinions of respondents were given in Table 7.

Table 7: Global Awareness

S.No	Description	Not Required		Required		Very much Required		Very Important		Must		Mean	Std.	Rank
1	Educational issues	2	5.1%	0	.0%	6	15.4%	18	46.2%	13	33.3%	4.03	.986	4
2	Ethics in decision making	0	.0%	0	.0%	3	7.7%	17	43.6%	19	48.7%	4.41	.637	1
3	Global competition	0	.0%	0	.0%	7	17.9%	18	46.2%	14	35.9%	4.18	.721	3
4	Political issues	4	10.30%	2	5.1%	17	43.6%	11	28.2%	5	12.8%	3.28	1.099	6
5	Social/cultural change	2	5.10%	1	2.6%	7	17.9%	19	48.7%	10	25.6%	3.87	1.005	5
6	Sustainable Business practices	0	.0%	1	2.6%	5	12.8%	10	25.6%	23	59.0%	4.41	.818	2

It is seen that the highest number of the total respondents leaned towards ethics and decision making, followed by sustainable business practices while the least preference was given towards political issues.

The analysis of the criteria under global awareness v/s region is listed in accordance with variables such as global

competition, social change etc. and is depicted in Table 8.

Table 8: Global Awareness vs Region

S. No	Description	Southern			Other		
		Mean	Std.	Rank	Mean	Std.	Rank
1	Educational issues	4.00	.707	4	4.05	1.174	5
2	Ethics in decision making	4.59	.507	1	4.27	.703	3
3	Global competition	4.06	.827	3	4.27	.631	2
4	Political issues	3.35	1.169	6	3.23	1.066	6
5	Social/cultural change	3.65	1.057	5	4.05	.950	4
6	Sustainable business practices	4.35	.931	2	4.45	.739	1

Ethics in decision making and sustainable business practices were considered to be the first preference for the Southern and other regions respectively. Similarly, global competition and sustainable business practices were considered second preference by other and Southern regions respectively, while political issues were considered the least preference by both regions.

The analysis of the criterion under global awareness extended against portfolio was depicted in Table 9.

Table 9: Global Awareness vs Portfolio

S.No.	Description	Design			Merchandising			Production		
		Mean	Std.	Rank	Mean	Std.	Rank	Mean	Std.	Rank
1	Educational issues	4.23	.832	3	3.83	1.150	4	4.13	.835	5
2	Ethics in decision making	4.23	.725	2	4.50	.514	1	4.50	.756	1
3	Global competition	4.08	.760	4	4.22	.732	3	4.25	.707	4
4	Political issues	3.23	1.363	6	3.28	1.127	6	3.38	.518	6
5	Social/cultural change	3.77	.927	5	3.72	1.179	5	4.38	.518	3
6	Sustainable business practices	4.31	1.032	1	4.44	.616	2	4.50	.926	2

Table 9 followed ethics in decision making as first preference under merchandising and production, while the second preference under design. Conversely, sustainable business was considered first preference for design while having been second for merchandising and production. Political issues was held as the least preferred under all the three domains.

Table 10 depicts the analysis of the criterion under global awareness extended to business type.

Table 10: Global Awareness vs Business Type

S.No.	Description	Export House			Retail			Fashion house		
		Mean	Std.	Rank	Mean	Std.	Rank	Mean	Std.	Rank
1	Educational issues	4.00	.784	4	4.40	1.265	4	3.80	.941	4
2	Ethics in decision making	4.57	.514	1	4.50	.527	1	4.20	.775	2
3	Global competition	4.21	.893	3	4.10	.316	5	4.20	.775	2
4	Political issues	3.36	1.277	6	3.50	1.080	6	3.07	.961	6
5	Social/cultural change	3.71	1.204	5	4.40	.516	3	3.67	.976	5
6	Sustainable business practices	4.43	.938	2	4.50	.707	2	4.33	.816	1

The first preference for retail and export houses was given to ethical decision making skills while being second for fashion houses. Contrary to this, sustainable business practices stood second for retail and export houses and first for fashion houses, while all the three business houses listed political issues as least preferred.

Table 11: Global Awareness – Rank Order

S.No	Description	Overall	Region		Portfolio			Business Type		
			Southern	Other	Design	Merchandising	Production	Export House	Retail	Fashion House
1	Educational issues	4	4	5	3	4	5	4	4	4
2	Ethics in decision making	1	1	3	2	1	1	1	1	2
3	Global competition	3	3	2	4	3	4	3	5	2
4	Political issues	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
5	Social/cultural change	5	5	4	5	5	3	5	3	5
6	Sustainable business practices	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	1

Sustainable business practices were held as the most preferred by other regions, design portfolio and fashion houses, whereas, ethics and decision making was held first by the rest. Similarly, ethics and decision making were considered second preference by design portfolio and fashion houses, whereas, sustainable business practices were preferred second by the rest.

Unanimously political issues were considered the least preferred.

FINDINGS

- Interpreting customer needs and wants was a vital skill for leadership management. The skill of critiquing others constructively was of least importance under leadership management.
- Ethics and decision making and sustainable business practices were considered of equal importance under global awareness, whereas political issues are held as least important.

CONCLUSIONS

The managerial competency of an apparel designer is judged based on their leadership management skills and overall global awareness. The study has been carried out with the objective to identify the skills needed to produce proficiently abled apparel designers. In order to discern the expertise needed, 50 questionnaires were distributed to the heads of various types of fashion apparel business establishments across India. It was gathered that taking ethical decisions and upholding sustainable business practices, play a vital role in establishing the competency of an apparel designer. Primary importance must be provided to the requirements and the desires of the consumer, while keeping in mind that decision making and team work are key factors.

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